

CT
04

listen

CELEBRATING POSITIVE TEEN CHOICES



MIKE SWEENEY

Branded Between • Rite of Passage • Powder Lies • Get Moving



Stranded

Sixteen-year-old Jill kicked a rock, blasting it out of her path. Her anger shot to seething as she limped on to her destination.

Her brother Dusty kept in step behind her. "Did that hurt?"

but we're stuck. Are you suggesting we rush in and announce, 'Hey, Grandma, Mom and Dad are shooting up crank. That's why they look like Mr. Skeleton and Mrs. Skeletor.'" Jill was yelling, and Dusty's cheeks were wet with tears.

ing weight."

"I've been sick with the flu more than once, Mom."

"I don't believe you, Lisa. Do you have anorexia?"

Lisa looked surprised, and then slowly nodded her head.

Between

By Jean Ann Williams

Jill sighed and envisioned hiking remote trails in the mountains. "Yes, it hurt." But instead of hiking they were walking three miles to Grandma Grace's house.

"We need to tell someone."

"Forget you, Dusty. Dad would be mad enough to split a temple vein. He'd hate us for the rest of our lives. Is that what you want?"

"No, I just thought . . ."

"Well, don't think." Jill suddenly stopped walking and turned, and Dusty bumped into her.

"But Jill, shouldn't we tell Grandma Grace?"

"I'm not telling and neither are you." Jill hurried on as Dusty jogged to keep pace.

"Mom and Dad never sleep," Dusty said. "The house smells bad and is dirty. I just want them to stop doing—you know."

Jill grabbed Dusty's shoulders. "Don't you think I want the same? I'm trying to figure out what to do,

Jill wrapped an arm around her brother's shoulders. "I'm sorry. Please don't cry. We'll just stay at Grandma's a few days and catch up on sleep."

Dusty wiped his eyes with his palms. "I don't know, Jill. Mom needs me, so I can't stay that long."

Jill hooked her arm in his. "Dusty, Mom's not a baby, and you're only 12 for Pete's sake." They walked in silence the rest of the way.

Jill had a great feeling of relief when the house roof came into view.

Grandma Grace took one look at the kids and knew that all was not right. She called their mom, Lisa, who assured her mother that Jill and Dusty were fine. She and their dad were sick with the flu, and it would help if the kids could stay with her a few days.

When Lisa dropped by three days later, her mother's mouth dropped open. "Lisa, you keep los-

Jill and Dusty exchanged looks with raised eyebrows.

After promising her mother that she'd see a doctor, Lisa and Dusty climbed into the truck. He peered out the cab window, waving until they disappeared down the road.

That afternoon Jill met with friends at Pappy Jon's Burger Barn. The group talked, laughed, drank shakes, munched on fries, and Jill forgot her problems. Walking to the restaurant, she had vowed to make a life for herself, even if it lasted only days.

Later Jill and her friend Mindy walked to their homes.

"Why are you staying at your grandma's? Is it your mom? She's not looking too good these days. And I've heard people talking."

Jill ignored the questions.

Mindy touched Jill's arm. "Talk to me. You can tell me if something's wrong." A friend since grade school, Mindy nudged Jill,

steering her off the sidewalk. "Let's chat." They plopped under a massive oak tree and leaned against its trunk.

Jill sighed. "Everything's fine." But she could no longer pretend. Mindy's knowing look convinced her of that.

"Are you OK?"

Jill's nose stung as the floodgate of tears broke. She lunged forward and hid her head between her knees, trying not to sob out loud.

Mindy wrapped her arms around Jill, who kept her head down. "Mindy, you can't tell a soul." She wiped her leaky nose. "Not one person, promise?"

Mindy crossed her heart. "I give you my word."

With her head still between her knees, she said, "My parents shoot up crank."

Mindy's breath caught in her throat. "Oh, Jill, I didn't know."

"They've been doing crank for a long time, and things have gone from bad to nightmarish." Jill looked up at Mindy. "Mom and Dad always fight, have lost tons of weight, and stay awake for days at a time." She leaned into Mindy. "I'm sure I'll go insane if I have to stay home. I can just feel it."

"Jill, you've got to tell your grandma." Jill looked at Mindy as if she had saucered in from another planet.

The girls looked up when two guys from school came and stood over them. The shorter kid squatted down and uncurled his fist. "Wanna Bud?"

Jill looked at the marijuana cigarette, and could picture her father smoking them her entire life. She shook her head and waved the kid off.

He glanced at Mindy's glacier expression, and the boys left with-

out another word.

"OK, Mindy, but will you stay with me when I tell Grandma? The news will crush her."

"Sure." Mindy hugged her.

Grandma Grace had to sit down when she heard the news. And she agreed that Jill should stay with her.

Jill called her mom the next morning, and they met after school.

"Get in." Her mother reached across the seat and opened the door. "I've got stuff to do. Another project you'll like . . ."

"Mom, we need to talk." Jill slid inside the rust-bucket truck.

Lisa reached for the key in the ignition. "Sure. On the ride home."

Jill laid her hand on her mom's to stop her from starting the truck. She licked her dry lips and steadied her breathing. "I'm not going home until you and Dad quit using crank."

Lisa's face twisted in confusion. "Oh Jill, I need it. It helps me get things done."

"No, Mom. You think it does, but you spend weeks on projects that used to take a few days. And you never finish them." Jill grabbed her mom's wrist. "This is not skin, meat, and bones." She shook her mom's arm up and down. "Just skin and bones. You're killing yourself, Mom."

Lisa bowed her head and stared at the steering wheel.

Jill continued. "I'm sorry, but Dusty and I can't sleep because you guys fight all night long. My grades have dropped. It's stressing me out."

Lisa jerked her head up. "Suit yourself."

Jill winced and stifled the sob churning in her gut. "Mom, please, if you quit, Dad might."

Lisa's eyes looked hollow in her once healthy face. "I gotta go." She started the truck. "See if I care that you live with Grandma."

Jill stumbled out of the truck and fought the desire to look back. Her heart had just shattered into a gazillion pieces.

A few days later Lisa and Dusty visited Jill, who crossed her arms and watched her mom. Lisa looked as exhausted as a cat that had been stranded in a tree for days.

Grandma Grace fixed Lisa a cup of hot herbal tea and buttered a warm roll, which she devoured. Then she lay on the couch and curled into a fetal position. Within seconds she was sound asleep.

Dusty and Jill watched their mother. "Mom hasn't used crank in two days."

Jill put her arm around Dusty. "Wonder if Dad has tried to quit?" Dusty shook his head. Jill felt a knot form in her stomach. When Lisa awoke, she didn't ask Jill to come home. Instead she promised to visit again soon. That didn't happen, though.

A few days later Dusty arrived at Grandma Grace's, hungry and tired. Their mother had started shooting up again. After Dusty had eaten, he and Jill sat on either side of their grandmother, and she put her arms around them. They longed for the day that their parents would stop using crank—for good. 🌀

COCAINE HOTLINE

If you have a family member addicted to cocaine or are wanting help yourself, call:

1-800-COCAINE or
1-800-662-HELP

Which Drug Is More Dangerous?

What's more dangerous, pot or heroin? Carrie

I don't consider any illicit drug more dangerous than the other. They can all be addictive and have the capability to cause enormous problems for those who use them. It's important to view every mood- and mind-altering substance as hazardous, and the use of it as risky behavior. Everyone reacts in different ways to different drugs. The best way to be safe is to view each and every drug as the starting point to a life full of despair and to stay as far away from drugs as you can.

Do all schools, such as mine, have kids with nothing better to do than get stoned? Toni

Probably not. Sure, there are kids in almost any school who are going to get high, and some schools have more drug-using students than others. Some schools are aware of the problem and swiftly deal with it, while others turn a blind eye to it. I'm not sure how your school views the problem as you seem to see it, but it wouldn't be fair to say that each and every school in the country is full of students who are drug users. There are literally thousands upon thousands of kids who enter school each day clean and sober. And each of them should hold their head high that they have made responsible and con-

scientious choices. There's no better feeling than to know that you never have to worry about the terrible and tragic results of drug use because you don't allow them into your body.

Is drug addiction worse when you're a kid or an adult? Trevor

It's worse to have a drug addiction at any age. Teens have different responsibilities than adults, and drug problems affect them equally. As a teen, you might see your grades plummet, healthy activities and hobbies curtailed, or have legal problems. Adults are usually affected with employment issues, marriage problems, and health concerns. Either way, addiction is harmful at any age. In my drug-counseling career, I've seen people from 12 to 80 whose lives have been disrupted by the use of alcohol and other drugs. Addiction is an equal opportunity disease. It doesn't discriminate based on age, race, or religion.

I discovered that my 13-year-old brother has been sneaking alcohol from my parents' liquor cabinet and getting drunk on the weekends. Should I be a snitch and tell on him? Carolyn

I wouldn't say you are being a snitch for doing your brother a favor and maybe saving his life. It's more likely that you would be a hero. Keeping what you know to yourself and not reporting it to your parents could be viewed as

enabling his behavior. You have a responsibility to make sure someone knows about any dangerous behavior that could be fatal to your brother. How would you feel if something bad were to happen to him when you could have prevented it? It's better to be safe than sorry. Let your parents in on what you know as soon as possible. The life you save may be your brother's. ☞



Go ahead, ask Gary his advice on some of those big questions. Gary Somdahl is a dad who puts his skills as a licensed youth chemical dependency counselor to the real-world test all the time. His latest book is *Drugs and Kids*.

Send your questions to:

ASK GARY

Listen magazine
55 West Oak Ridge Drive
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740.

When Mike wanted to join the college fraternity, he did so with the hope of making some close, lifelong friends. However, before he was able to join, his would-be friends beat him, stripped him, forced him to drink copious amounts of alcohol, made him run naked through the streets in cold weather, dunked his head in a toilet, and rubbed toothpaste on his genitals.

With friends like these, who needs enemies?

The sad thing about Mike's story is that it is not an isolated incident. On the contrary, all across the country, in colleges and in high schools (as well as other places such as the military, religious cults, even marching bands), thousands of young people, men and women, are subjected to a rather perverse form of initiation rites: it's called hazing, and not only is it foolish and dangerous, it's also illegal (at least in 42 states so far).

Hazing has been defined as: "Any action taken or situation created, intentionally, whether on or off fraternity premises, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule. Such activities may include but are not limited to the following: use of alcohol; paddling in any form; creation of excessive fatigue. . . ." ¹

Hazing, however, is still a common practice. Though hard statistics are difficult to come by—because only the drastic cases that involve death or serious injury are given much publicity—every year at least one person in the United States is killed by hazing, and it's these few really tragic incidents that have brought the problem out into the open.

A few years ago at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), known as a very pres-

tigious university where one tends to think of the students as just a bunch of brainy computer and math geeks, freshman Scott Krueger died in a fraternity hazing ritual. In another college, a student, after being beaten, stripped, and forced to drink a lot of alcohol, was locked in the trunk of a car and later died. A student at another college was, as part of a hazing ritual, forced to drink so much water that he died. Another was beaten to death.

Of course, not all hazing incidents result in death, but still the stories about what people are put through can be horrifying. What's even worse, though, is how widespread the problem has become.

A survey conducted by Alfred University in New York, where a few years ago a male student died while being hazed, revealed that out of a survey of 1,500 high school students:

- "48 percent of students who belong to groups reported being subjected to hazing activities.
- "43 percent reported being subjected to humiliating activities.
- "30 percent reported performing potentially illegal acts as part of their initiation.
- "Substance abuse in hazing is prevalent in high school (23 percent) and increases in college (51 percent).

"All high school students who join groups are at risk of being hazed." ²

Initiation rites are hardly anything new. All through history there are accounts of what people have had to go through in order to be accepted into some group of one kind or another. Oftentimes, however, these rites are a kind of preparation, a process in which those who aren't of the right makeup are weeded out.

That, though, is radically differ-

ent than hazing, which has little or nothing to do with preparation or training. Instead, though the psychology behind hazing varies, the idea is simply that those who want to be part of a group need to show just how badly they want to be part of that group. It's a means, supposedly, of showing one's commitment, one's "worthiness" to join.

"The end result of hazing is usually embarrassment and demoralization, but that's not always the intention, says child and adolescent psychologist D'Arcy Lyness, Ph.D. 'I don't think that's on anyone's mind as hazing begins. . . . Hazing has to do with earning entry—and making it hard to earn entry—into whatever group it is.'"³

The sad thing about hazing is that it creates an environment in which people take part in things that normally they would never do. For instance, how many "good kids" under ordinary circumstances would beat some young girls and then cover them with mud, human excrement, pig entrails, garbage, and paint? Most wouldn't, but this is exactly what some did at a hazing ritual at a Chicago school early last year. Before it was over, five girls were taken to the hospital (one with a broken ankle), while 23 students, male and female, were charged with battery, 33 seniors were expelled, and 20 juniors were suspended from school.

And the stories go on. In one high school hazing incident a student was made to run naked outside with a cracker in his buttocks. In another incident, hard objects were shoved into a young man's buttocks, causing severe damage. In another case a college football coach was suspended when some rookies were forced to eat live goldfish. In one school a whole athletic team was suspended when a 17-year-old



RITE OF PASSAGE

By Jared Scott

rugby player nearly died during a hazing ritual. He had five times the legal level of alcohol in his blood. Cases of rape and other types of sexual abuse, even violence, have been reported in hazing rituals as well.

Though hazing is often associated only with colleges, particularly

fraternities, it is becoming increasingly common in high schools across the country as well. It is estimated that 1.5 million high school students are hazed every year in the United States, despite the laws against it in most states. In fact, most students who live in states

where hazing is illegal don't even know it's illegal. That lack of knowledge, however, is no excuse.

The sad thing, too, is that most students who went through a hazing never reported it, though most saw the experience as negative, with consequences such as physical injuries, a drop in grades, abusive behavior, guilt, embarrassment, and insomnia. Of course, you don't have to be Sigmund Freud to understand why, for instance, being beaten, cursed, sexually abused, or forced to expose yourself publicly, or having your head pushed into a toilet, or being forced to be covered with human excrement, and so on . . . could have a negative effect. For some people the damage lasts a long time.

No young person should agree to hazing—ever—no matter the circumstances. No membership in any organization, club, or group is worth going through these “rites” of passage. In the end, what does hazing prove, other than that you are dumb enough to allow yourself to be humiliated, violated, made to act like a fool, all in order to join a group? Big deal. It's nothing to be proud of.

If there's any pride, it should be that you have enough inner strength, enough personal stamina, to walk away and say no. And if you face the pressure of hazing and don't feel strong enough to walk away, get help. Call your parents, call a teacher, call an adult you trust. But don't be foolish enough to allow yourself to be hazed. It's not worth it.

Just ask Mike. 🍀

¹www.stophazing.org/definition.html

²www.alfred.edu/news/executive_summary/executive_summary.html

³www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/hazing_p2.html

road trip



TINA



ALLY



LISA

Story: Monica Cane / Illustration: Shane Johnson

So far in Road Trip:

Ally and Tina convince Lisa that smoking cigarettes will make her look older. And that Johnny, a friend of Ally's cousin, thinks that girls who smoke are cool.

Hi there. Come on in. So where are you guys headed?

Yeah, we're going to visit Universal Studios where they make movies. I hope we meet some famous people.

We're going to Los Angeles but wanted to stop by and say hi.

That sounds totally cool.

Do you have time to hang out with us for a while before you go?

He's so cute. Sure we have time.

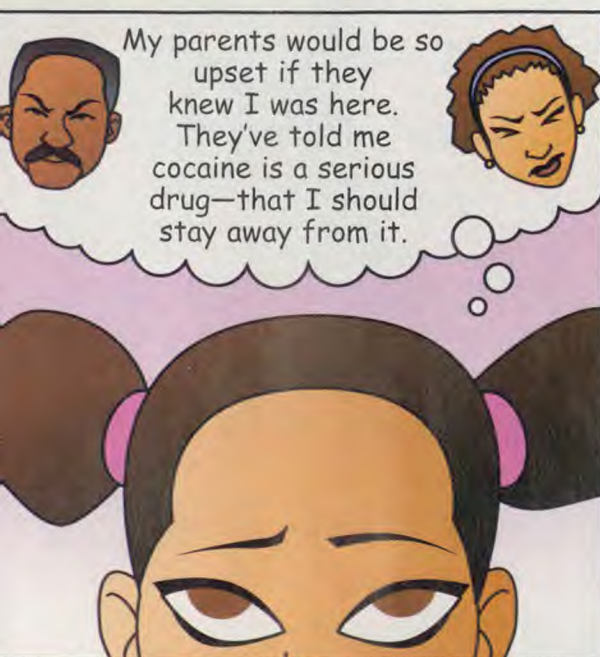
Hey! What's that, Johnny?

It's just a little bit of cocaine. No big deal. It's like having a cup of coffee—kinda gets you hyper. Here, try some.



I like coffee!
I'll try it.

Yeah, me too.



My parents would be so upset if they knew I was here. They've told me cocaine is a serious drug—that I should stay away from it.



Come on, Lisa; it's no big deal. Just try a little.

Well, OK. I guess it won't hurt to try a little.



This doesn't feel like coffee. It's way worse. My heart's pounding. I feel all jittery. I shouldn't have listened to them. What am I doing? If I tell them I don't want any more, they are going to think I'm stupid.





Terry Crews

The Wind in His Face

By Steve C. Boone

The autumn breeze played tag in the treetops, making a dry, rustling sound and tousling Bob's shaggy brown hair. He shuffled along the sidewalk, head down, hands in his pockets, and kicking fallen leaves and acorns out of his way. Why had his dad made such a big deal when he'd asked for help with tuition? The way he'd exploded, you'd have thought Bob had asked for tuition for Harvard or Yale.

Bob had dreamed of being a police officer ever since he was a

little kid when the men in the black uniforms would rescue him, his mom, and his sister from his dad's drunken rages. His dad didn't drink now, except for a few beers, but he could be just as mean and hurtful when he got angry.

Bob could still hear his dad's words echoing in his head and burning in his gut: "You want me to finance *what*? The police academy? Are you crazy? Boy, I wouldn't give 10 cents toward any project you want to start. You won't ever finish

it. You'll drop out just as you did football!"

That was all Bob could bear right now. He blocked out the rest. He felt that his dad might as well have punctured his gut with a hot poker. No matter how hard Bob tried, he never seemed to be able to please his dad. He had tried out for football, but only because his dad pushed him to. Bob had no desire to play football and hadn't been very good at it. The coach had yelled at him a lot too—just as his dad did.

Bob broke into a run. He ran as fast as he could until his lungs were screaming for him to stop. Running was what he really enjoyed. When he ran, he was able to forget that he was the son of a second-generation cotton mill worker. He was able to forget that they were poor and lived in a 70-year-old mill house. But he was able to dream of a better future than heaving heavy bolts of cloth until your back humped, and breathing cotton dust till you coughed all night.

Bob slowed to a stop and bent over, his chest heaving. The crisp October air seared his lungs as he gasped to catch his breath. The sun was beginning to set, and he thought with it went his hopes of bettering himself. How would he ever get out of this mill town if he couldn't go to school and learn to do something besides slinging cotton? There had to be a way—there just had to be a way.

The next morning when Bob arrived at school, he spotted his friend Greg in the hallway by the bulletin board. "Hey, Bob. Come check this out. They're offering a scholarship this year to the winner of the state track meet."

"No way!"

"See for yourself, bud."

Greg was right. The memo said that the winner would be awarded a full scholarship to the school of their choosing. This was too good to be true. He believed he could win. And he'd show his dad that he was no quitter. Maybe even make him proud, too.

"You're going to enter, aren't you?" asked Greg.

"You bet I am. But I gotta get out there and work hard if I'm gonna beat out those other guys."

"You can do it. There's nobody faster than you; even with your

toothpick legs!"

Bob punched Greg in the arm and laughed. Greg was a good friend.

Bob began to get up an hour earlier than usual so he could run—even when it was cold and still dark. One early morning before the sun came up, he was running through the mill parking lot. Suddenly he was blinded by truck headlights. The Dumpster driver hadn't seen him in time. Bob swerved . . . but not enough. Suddenly it was darker than ever—and silent too.

When Bob woke up in the emergency room, he learned that he had assorted bruises, a concussion, and a compound fracture in his ankle. It would probably be two months before the cast would be off and he'd be able to run again. He'd promised himself that he'd win that scholarship. This was just one more obstacle to overcome.

As soon as the ankle healed sufficiently, Bob became almost brutal in his training. His one focus was winning that race. And finally the big day arrived.

Bob's ankle still ached from time to time while he trained, but he had finally recovered his speed. Waiting for the race to begin, Bob saw his only threat to winning was the guy next to him from Duplow County. Each boy eyed the other with a sneer. The runners crouched. The gun fired. And they were off. Bob's lungs soon throbbed as he pushed himself to his limit. The Duplow guy was still right beside him and bearing down hard. All at once Bob felt a stabbing pain in his ankle. His face grew more flushed as anger surged up within him. He willed himself to keep going. Felt the wind pounding against him. And


the pain in his ankle grew worse. *I can't lose now, not after all I've been through*, he thought to himself. He focused his whole being on the banner ahead. It would be worth it all when that banner broke over his chest. But it wasn't to be. The pain was just too bad. He did make it to the finish line, but the guy from Duplow County had already crossed the winning line.

Bob limped over to a bench and flopped down. Dejection at his defeat overwhelmed him. His dream of a scholarship that would take him away from the cotton fields lay crumpled at his feet. Just then his dad walked up. He could see the hurt and disappointment on Bob's face.

"I didn't think you had it in you, son. I'm really proud of you. That was a pretty good time for a fellow with a bum ankle." Then his dad paused and said, "Let's talk about that business of the police academy again. Maybe we can work something out. Here. Let me help you back to the truck." 🚚



Terry Crews



RENEE

By Michele Deppe

"Pen! C'mon. I need to get in there, or I'm going to be late!" my brother shouted from the hallway.

I stared at the indicator stick, my hand trembling. This couldn't be real. I couldn't be pregnant.

"Pen!" My brother pounded on the bathroom door now.

"Just a minute," I whispered, rubbing away streams of tears from my cheeks. I sniffed hard, and caught my reflection in the mirror. Another nosebleed. Blotting a tissue under my nose, I decided to get rid of the pregnancy test by putting it in the wastebasket and covering it with some old trash.

I dashed out the door before Robert could see my swollen eyes.

Friendless

Our family of four had moved here from Manchester, England, three years before. At first, people from Mahler High thought I was exotic because of my British accent. But as soon as the novelty wore off, I found myself alone, drifting from group to group, never having any close friends. That is until I met Renee.

Renee was an outcast at school too, because she liked to stun peo-

ple with her creepy Gothic appearance. Her rice-white face, dyed black hair, and ebony lipstick really irritated most of the conservative New Englanders in town.

I had seen Renee at school; it was impossible to miss her. But I'd never talked to her before until we found ourselves in the queue for the cashier at a music store. We were buying the exact same CD.

"You like Nik Kershaw?" Renee said. She couldn't believe that we had something in common.

I turned around and said, "Yeah. Especially that old song about Bogart." Our eyes met, and we started laughing. I was surprised that her voice was so soft and delicate. I thought she would sound just as harsh or scary as she looked.

We left the record store together that afternoon and went to lunch. Then we hung out that weekend, the last one of summer vacation. I knew my junior year was going to be a lot more fun. I finally had a friend.

My parents were put off by Renee's looks, and it caused a lot of fights between us.

"I cannot understand why you don't have more suitable friends,

Penelope. Renee looks absolutely ghastly!" my mother said in her most rebuking tone of voice.

"Mother, you don't even know her," I argued. "What is it you used to say about not judging a book by its cover?"

Hanging Out With the Crew

If my parents had known more about Renee's character, they would really have been upset. That autumn I started hanging out with Renee's friends, whom she called the "crew." The crew was always glad to see me. I told them stories about our history teacher, Mr. Snodgrass, and they would all roar with laughter. I lapped up their attention like a kitten devouring a saucer of milk.

The crew was older, in their 20s, and lived in an old house on the other side of town. They did drugs, including Renee, but I thought I could get by just watching.

However, one Saturday night Thomas, the informal crew leader, asked me to get high with him. We were alone in the house—everyone else had gone to the store. I didn't want to use drugs,

but I was so complimented that Thomas had asked me to do something that was a secret.

I had a bit of a crush on Thomas, too, so I said OK.

That was the first time I used cocaine. I quickly inhaled the powder before I lost my nerve and then leaned back on a dirty beanbag and let the euphoria of the drug rush through my body. Minutes later, before my brain could wrap around what was happening, Thomas and I were having unprotected sex.

Up close, Thomas reeked of body odor and cigarettes. I wanted to get away from him, but my body seemed weak and heavy, as if a wet towel were wrapped around my limbs.

During the months that followed, I sank into depression. I often exchanged being intimate with Thomas for drugs. I hated being with him, but it was the only way I could get the cocaine that I thought I needed.

It was all so sickening, and I couldn't believe I was a part of it.

Which Brings Us Back to Today

I couldn't face going to school today. I had a lot of thinking to do—about my future and about my baby. With a new life growing inside me, I could no longer ignore the fact that I was an addict.

The chilly spring breeze snaked through my hair as I walked down by the river. I came to the water's edge. I felt shaky. I needed cocaine, or I was going to be sick.

Maybe I should just throw myself into the water. No more cravings, no more baby, no more me.

I sank down on the grass and began to weep. I hated my life. I'd had dreams once of becoming a nurse. The insecurities that I'd felt because I didn't have any close

friends seemed a stupid reason to throw my life away on drugs. I had believed a lie, because now I knew that cocaine doesn't fix your problems; it creates them.

"Miss, can I help you?"

The voice startled me, and I jerked my head up to see a police officer standing there. I was speechless. For one wild moment I thought I was going to be arrested for possessing coke, but then I remembered that I didn't have any with me.

"Um, I'm just really . . ." and I began sobbing again, harder than ever.

The officer waited patiently for me to regain control. Easing himself down on one knee, he looked at me with sympathy in his eyes.

"You know," he said gently, "I know lots of really nice people. People who help kids with any problem you could name. Drugs, abuse, pregnancy, depression, whatever it is, there are people who can help."

I regained my composure a little, and then felt blood dripping from my nose again. The policeman probably knew that my nose was bleeding because I sniffed cocaine, but he seemed to sincerely want to help me. I wondered if my baby was OK. I wondered if my parents would be able to forgive me.

Looking at the officer, I summoned the only courage I had left. "I need help. Please."

Postscript

Officer Landers became my true friend that day. With his assistance I checked into a drug rehab program. I am clean now, and I talk to kids who come to the rehab. I try to encourage them by telling them that they can get their lives turned around, as I did. I wish that none of us had to learn

lessons the hard way.

My baby girl, Grace, is a year old now. I am so thankful that she is healthy and normal, and she smiles more than any baby I know!

I don't hang with the crew anymore. I have new friends, and I'm a lot happier.

Take my advice and steer clear of getting high, even if it seems it will guarantee having friends. After all, since I learned the hard way, that means you don't have to. ☞

Cocaine is . . .

- **highly addictive:** cocaine users lose interest in their family, friends, school, jobs . . . just about everything, except using more cocaine.

- **harmful to your health:** physical effects of cocaine use include rapid, irregular, shallow breathing; unconsciousness; high blood pressure; cardiac arrest. Cocaine can produce feelings of restlessness, irritability, and anxiety.

- **potentially fatal:** cocaine-related deaths are often a result of cardiac arrest or seizures followed by respiratory arrest. Sudden death can occur with the first use of cocaine.

- **HOT LINK:** For more information about cocaine use, visit the National Institute on Drug Abuse:
www.nida.nih.gov/Infobox/cocaine.html

Classroom Challenges

By Derek C. Bowe

Walt felt as though he sat on pins instead of plush leather when the hired Cadillac rolled up at his new high school. In the backseat his cousin Lana waved glamorously to her shocked friends. But Walt shrank, praying that his seat would swallow him.

Being whisked around like some celebrity is gonna get me written off as a stuck-up brat! he fumed. Barely waiting for the car to stop, he grabbed his crutches and hobbled out.

"Hey, wait up," Lana yelled, lugging his books, plus her own.

Strike two, he groaned. Only wimps get their stuff carted around! He tried to walk faster, but Lana caught him just outside his classroom. When he was seated inside, Lana plopped his books before him.

"See ya later," she sang, patting his hand before gliding out. Walt glanced furtively around. Mercifully, the only other people in the room were absorbed in comics.

Soon the room echoed with sounds as the students cracked jokes and thumped their books onto their desks. Unlike Walt, they'd been in school for two weeks.

Looks like a tight group, he observed, looking around the room.

Jim and Pete, the boys who'd been reading comics, struck up a conversation with him. Jim ventured, "What's with the crutches?"

Walt paused, then decided to be open. "A car knocked me off my bike and landed me in the hospital for two months."

"Bummer!" Pete whistled. "So that's why you're starting late."

"Yeah, but I'm learning to walk again," Walt said, beckoning toward his crutches.

Just then Mr. Rooney, the homeroom teacher, walked in, his smile widening when he spied Walt. "You must be our new student, Walt—"

Interrupting, Jim spied, "He's a 15-year-old, math-hating, liver-loving, basketball-playing doctor-to-be!"

"Yeah," Pete deadpanned, "but he doesn't have a girlfriend!"

The room erupted in laughter, Walt included.

Recovering his voice, Mr. Rooney chortled, "Looks like you're already one of us!"

Yeah, Walt marveled, faces beaming all around him. Why was I ever so afraid of fitting in?

For the next two weeks he joined the others in joking around with Mr. Rooney and complaining about having too much homework. But like almost everybody else, he somehow found time to do it. Then sometimes at break, he taught Jim and Pete to walk with crutches as though they were legs.

His first lunchtime presented a challenge. He tried joining the line of students clamoring for their meals, but a student server saw his problem, and from then on she saved his lunch, presenting it to him when things quieted.

"So you've found yourself a girlfriend!" Pete teased as Walt joined him and Jim.

"No, a wife," Jim corrected, ducking a mock punch from Walt.

But when Mr. Rooney said he wanted to see him after classes one

Friday, Walt's newfound happiness vanished.

"Uh oh. You're in it big, Walt!" Maria announced. "Told ya all that studying was dangerous!"

Walt played along, but he worried if he'd indeed done something wrong. *It's the crutch lessons, he gulped. Mr. Rooney figures they'll hurt someone!*

But it was something else.

"Walt," Mr. Rooney started slowly, "you've fitted into the class and have done your assignments well—"

"Thanks!" Walt grinned.

"So well you have to leave us." Now Walt was confused.

Mr. Rooney continued, "Ninth grade isn't challenging you. You've got to be where you can grow."

"I've got to be dreaming!" Walt mumbled.

Mr. Rooney forced himself to continue. "The principal and I, along with your mom and Miss Bentham, the tenth-grade teacher, want you to report to tenth grade starting Monday." He paused.

"Miss Bentham will help you catch up so you won't be stressed out." He rose, sighing. "I wish you could stay with us forever, Walt—but that wouldn't be right for you."

"Th—thanks, Mr. Rooney," he stuttered, going to the door. "But you haven't seen the last of me."

"I know how you feel," the teacher sympathized. "But one day you'll see."

Monday morning came, and Walt soon felt that tenth grade was all wrong! The teacher was just out of college. Unlike Mr. Rooney! His

classmates were unfriendly. Unlike the ninth graders! The work was boring. Unlike his old work. Even the classroom was dark and tomblike!

By the end of classes Walt raged, "I'm not gonna spend another minute here! I'm seeing the principal about this now!"

But would she listen? His heart skipped a beat. Everybody called her The General. Hunched forward with her hands clasped behind her back, she would slowly patrol the campus, poised to arrest some poor soul. She marched girls wearing short jumpers to her office and ripped out their hems to an acceptable length. Hard-core troublemakers became instant saints at her approach. Everyone dreaded being sent to The General's office!

Yet desperation drove the terrified Walt there.

"Come in and have a seat, Mr. Wright," Miss Butler said, smiling.

She smiles! Walt thought, flopping into a chair. *And she knows my name!*

"How may I help you?" she asked, pushing papers aside.

"I hate this change. I mean, I want . . ." Walt halted, confused.

"What you mean," she nodded kindly, "is that you want to return to ninth grade." She paused and smiled again. "Does that summarize it?"

"Well, yes, except ninth grade is better than tenth—," he started, then realized he sounded foolish.

"Really, Walt," she coaxed, surprisingly, "what's bothering you?"

He hung his head. "Well, all my friends—and Mr. Rooney—are back in ninth grade." Miss Butler listened attentively. "Things are different now. Plus the work is harder!" Unburdened, he awaited her response.

"I know it's not easy facing all these changes so soon after your accident. But you can do it, Walt. Handle tenth grade as you once handled fractures."

He sat up.

"Reach out to your classmates, and you'll find good friends there." He sat up straighter. "Just ignore the difficult person or two and their petty insults. Search for the good, and you'll find it. And as for Miss Bentham—relax! She admires your courage!"

Walt was speechless.

"Give my suggestions a try until next Friday. If you don't like it by then, I'll let you go to ninth grade."

"Sure thing!" Walt replied, his happy self returning with Miss Butler's fairness.

What happened the next few days shocked him. He spoke to his classmates first and gave pointers to anyone needing help in English, his strong subject. His classmates began to thaw, and they elected him umpire for their softball games. There were so many positive features about the class that he had to admit it did suit him better than ninth grade!

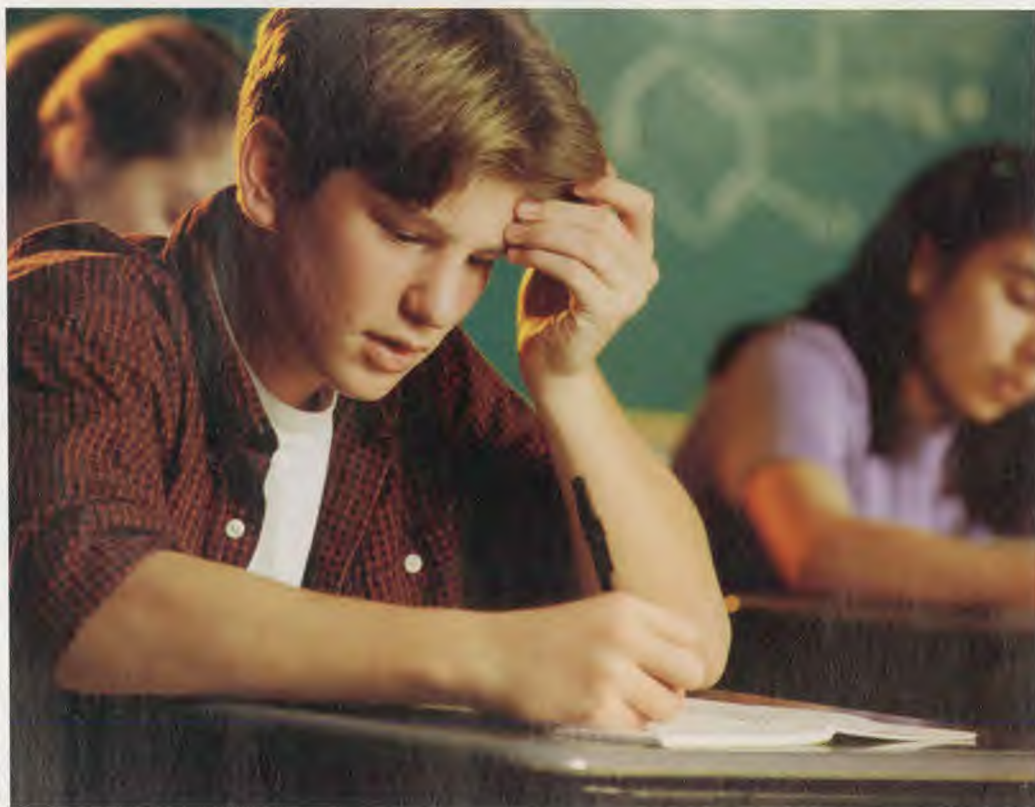
The next Friday he found Miss Butler near the auditorium.

"So, Mr. Wright," she smiled, "is it tenth grade or ninth?"

Walt paused, grinning sheepishly. "Ninth grade's great, but tenth grade's the place for me!"

He waited for an "I told you so!" But Miss Butler patted him on the shoulder and gently said, "Good for you!"

Then, hunched forward with her hands clasped behind her back, she ambled off to patrol the school for other Walt Wrights to help. 🍷



Cornstock Images/Getty Images

Mike Sweeney

Says, Forgiveness

Is the Name of the Game

By Markie Bazzey

Midway through the 2002 season Mike Sweeney, first baseman for the Kansas City Royals, was vying with Seattle Mariners' outfielder Ichiro Suzuki for the American League batting title (the player with the highest batting average at the end of the year).¹ With each hit, either Mike or Ichiro would reclaim the top spot. In the final game of the series disaster struck. Mike was facing the Mariners' starting pitcher, Joel Pineiro. Within seconds of Pineiro releasing a 90-plus mph strike, Mike was facedown on the ground with a bloody hand.

Was this a season-ending injury? Mike didn't know if his hand was broken as he picked himself up and headed toward the clubhouse for X-rays. Even though Mike, a career .307 player, was in extreme pain, before heading off the field he turned and gave Pineiro a nod as if to say, "I know you didn't do it on purpose."

A four-time all-star, Mike knows the value of forgiveness in a sport in which forgiveness can seem like a foreign word. Luckily, that day Mike experienced only a bruised finger. It could have been worse. Last summer, between his orthodontia appointments, Mike and I spoke about the value of forgiveness on and off the field.

"Forgiveness is there 100 percent in my life," says Mike. "It starts with God's forgiveness of me. He sees me as 100 percent beautiful and 100 percent perfect. That's the perfect picture of forgiveness. I try to emulate that in my life. It's a hard standard to follow, but it's the *only* standard to follow."

Mike's parents were the ones who first modeled forgiveness to him. "No matter how bad a thing I had done, after disciplining me they would give me a big hug and tell me how much they loved me," he says. "They explained that they had to discipline me because they wanted the best for me. That same unconditional love my parents showed me is what I want to show people."

As a veteran Royals' player, Mike has the opportunity to model forgiveness to his teammates. When a player makes a rookie mistake, rather than snub him by turning the shoulder or tell him that he screwed up and hurt the team, Mike will talk to him after the game. "I am really just trying to encourage him and show him love," Mike says.

Mistakes made during a game are rarely done in private. They are made in front of 40,000 fans, not including those watching on television. "Everyone knows when you do something wrong, and a lot of people see you do it. You can feel totally rejected. The last thing you want is to have a teammate reject you even more."

As a leader of the team, Mike feels that it's his responsibility to encourage his teammates when things don't go right by picking them up, wrapping his arms around them, and saying it's going to be OK. "In the locker room, actions speak louder than words," Mike adds.

"Forgiveness is so much healthier than revenge," says Mike. "When I forgive people, it's a lot of positive energy and a big burden off my chest." On the baseball field revenge can be a common reaction.



Two years ago fans in Chicago attacked the Royals first-base coach. An umpire was attacked the following season when the Royals returned to Chicago. At another game between the Royals and the Mariners, two players and a coach were ejected from the game. Some may believe that in these situations revenge would seem acceptable.

Mike understands firsthand how revenge is not a good choice. In a game against Detroit the pitcher refused to move the resin bag² from the mound. Mike felt it interfered with his ability to see the pitch. The pitcher swore several times at Mike, resulting in Mike rushing the mound. Mike was suspended for several games because of his actions. "Holding a grudge can be like a 50-pound weight lying on your heart. The feeling of revenge just imprisons you," he says. "Seeking revenge on somebody is just not worth it. I want to have a heart of forgiveness and love for everybody."

Just as Mike says no to revenge, he also says no to alcohol and drugs. For Mike, using alcohol and drugs is like being out in the middle of the ocean swimming with an anchor tied to your feet. It's definitely going to drown you. "The reality of life is that you have consequences for your actions," he says. "I'm doing everything I can to live a healthy lifestyle. I just can't imagine staring in the mirror and looking at an alcoholic or drug addict. I want to look back at myself 20 years from now and see that I have done everything I can to live a healthy life."

Someone once told Mike that in the game of life a friend is either an example or a warning. A friend who is an example is one who sets an example of how to live a positive life. A friend who is a warning is one who drags their friends down, whether into drugs and alcohol or something worse. Mike prefers to live his life as an example.

As I concluded my conversation with Mike about forgiveness, Mike closed with this question for all teens who read this article: "Do you want to be an example or a warning?" Only you can answer that question. 🌀

¹Mike Sweeney ended the 2002 season with a .340 batting average, second to Manny Ramirez, Boston Red Sox, who had a .349 average. Ichiro finished fourth with a .321 average.

²Resin is a white chalklike substance encased in a bag that lies on the backside of the pitcher's mound. Players, mostly pitchers, pick up the bag when they feel that the ball may be slipping out of their hands.



GOOD FOR YOU!

By Jean Ann Williams

Let's admit it; few of us eat healthful foods at every meal or snack. But if you're willing to make healthful eating a priority, your body will enjoy many benefits, and you'll be giving your body what it needs to function properly and for you to feel your best. It can help keep your emotions on a more even keel. And those temper flare-ups and down feelings will come less often.

How about testing your healthy smarts? Check the items below that are the best choices. All but two have more than one correct answer.

Quiz: (Find the answers at the bottom of the page.)

1. Granola Bars

- a. preservative-free energy nuggets
- b. generic banana nut bars
- c. granola bar with organic ingredients

2. Nuts

- a. candy coated
- b. raw and organic
- c. roasted and organic

3. Cookies

- a. home-baked carob chip (substitute chocolate chip recipe with whole-wheat flour, carob chips, and reduce sugar by 1/4)
- b. overly processed chocolate chip cookies
- c. Organic whole-wheat chocolate chip cookies

4. Sandwiches

- a. deli meat and cheese between white bread
- b. natural foods restaurant vegetarian burger
- c. build your own with veggies and white cheese

5. Sweets

- a. ice cream
- b. juice-sweetened smoothies with fruit and vitamins
- c. candy bars

6. Energy Bars

- a. bars that contain sugar, preservatives, and hydrogenated oils
- b. bars sweetened with fruit juices, preservatives, and hydrogenated oils
- c. high-energy bar

7. Cracker Snacks

- a. hydrogenated oil-packaged peanut butter between crackers
- b. build your own with blue corn chips and avocado or bean dip
- c. build your own whole-grain cracker and peanut butter

8. Carrots and Celery Sticks

- a. topped with heavily processed cheese
- b. spread with almond, sesame, or peanut butter
- c. smeared with soy cream cheese

9. Salads

- a. salad with bacon bits and high-fat cheeses
- b. create your own organic green salad with olive oil dressing
- c. fast-food salads, rather than burgers and fries

10. Rice Cakes

- a. national brand salted rice cakes
- b. organic whole-grain rice cakes
- c. brown rice chips

The Moose Sound Bite: To avoid toxin overload, eat organic, pesticide-free foods whenever possible.

Answers:
1. a/c. 2. a/c. 3. a/c. 4. b/c. 5. b. 6. c. 7. b/c. 8. b/c. 9. b/c. 10. a/b/c.

These days everyone wants you to read.

Teachers, career counselors, parents, even movie stars on library posters—they all have the same mantra.

Read.

Reading is fun/cool/powerful/a key to success/scrumptious. Reading boosts your IQ. Yes, it *looks* as though sitting somewhere by yourself, squinting at words put together by some stranger who might even be dead, is *supposed* to be a blast. So, turn off the TV and go read something.

It's a tough time to be a non-reader.

Myself, I happen to relish books. Actually, since you're reading this, I guess you might like to read too. But if you don't, I understand.

Books are lonely.

You can't talk to a book, or hug it, or joke around with it, or even give it a little smooch. That's why I wish that the Read to Succeed gang would mention the best part of reading, and that is to talk about what you've read with real, live people.

That's right, talking about books.

Face it. What do you usually talk about? Let's tentatively group the topics:

- Girls (or guys, if you're a girl)
- Other guys (or other girls)
- Parents, and the mystery of how they keep their jobs, since they're so out of it
- The meaning of life
- The nonmeaning of school
- Everything else

(That last category keeps this from getting stereotypical.)

You'll notice that "books" weren't high on our list. They're deep in the "everything else" topic.

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT...

BESIDES GUYS (OR GIRLS)

By Bill Powell



Sheryl Chapman/Getty Images

Somewhere between “clothes” and “homework.” Why talk about *books* when you could be talking about other guys, the meaning of life, or why she’s still pretending you don’t exist?

Well, if talking about books meant discussing book bindings and paper thickness, I’d agree with you. Books as objects are less intriguing than the average right foot. But some books, the great ones, happen to be chock full of some quite fascinating ideas.

Why *do* you talk? Probably lots of reasons, but a big one is that your friends, teachers, parents, plumber, or whoever, are different than you.

If you’ve got a problem, your friend might have a solution to help you solve it. If you think you’ve finally figured out the mystery of love, your philosophical plumber may have the perfect witty comment to topple your house of cards. Without other people we’d be abandoned in our own tiny heads.

Why read? Because authors are some of these other people. When you read, you listen to someone new talk for a while, someone who’s outside your fun, but small, circle. That’s what reading is really all about. You’re doing it now.

Authors also have one advantage: they get paid to polish their thoughts. They have to be clear, concise, and interesting, or they don’t get published. They cut every “you know,” “like,” “sort of,” and “man!” At least, that’s like what’s supposed to sort of happen, you know!

Forget the meaningless books. Instead, reach for the good books, the great books, the classics—those are the ones worth talking about. When a book is still being read after 100 years, 300 years, or

3,000 years, there's got to be a good reason.

Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Shakespeare, Bunyan—what do these names mean to you? Dull, dusty volumes of philosophy in the cobwebby shadows of the reference section of your library? Then blow off the dust, and you'll laugh at how wrong you were.

Myself, I hardly touched those books in high school. I read books, but usually not the classics. Plus, boring English lectures and deadly discussions of details ruined several excellent classics, especially Shakespeare. When I occasionally wandered into an older book, I quickly became confused by the weird writing style.

Then came college and an honors class. It was supposed to be this elite class, but you know what we did? We read books. And then we talked about them. We started at the dawn of Western literature with Homer's *Iliad* and worked our way right up to T. S. Eliot and C. S. Lewis.

I loved it. It was the best of two worlds—reading and talking. Reading is great, but it's only listening. Talking is great, but it often runs low on ideas. Now I had great books and great conversation.

First the books. Wouldn't you know it, the classics really were great. They made many modern-day novels look pale, drab, lifeless. Classical authors *wrestled*. They fought with the huge, obvious, incomprehensible things—love, death, God—things that are still mysteries after thousands of years.

I'd already done this myself in my small way, but how far can one guy go alone? If I'd never read or talked to anyone who was really wise, I'd have blundered around arguing about the meaning of life

with my equally clueless friends until we just got tired of trying.

Instead, through great books, I found out that a vast army has been hacking away at confusion for centuries, hunting for truth. But oddly enough, they've left their discoveries in boring-looking books with uninteresting covers.

Second, the conversation. In high school my book world was private. Now in honors class the world exploded into living, breathing conversation. And the army wasn't just dead authors—it was here, it was these strangers, and they were in my *classroom*. The battle still raged, and I could be a part of it.

The people were just as surprising as the books. Some of my classmates gave the impression that they'd auctioned off a significant chunk of their brains to cover tuition. Yet the same guy who sat across from me in the cafeteria and inhaled 2,805 meals of our college education could, if provoked by Thomas More's *Utopia*, say something fascinating.

Nobody, *nobody* in my classes turned out to be genuinely boring. I no longer believe in the myth of boring people. Nor do I believe that I thoroughly know my friends. How much do I *really* know? Everyone has a unique opinion about world events, true

love, the meaning of life. Everyone is different. Pry anyone open, and inside is pure gold.

Kind of like those dusty old classics.

So what about you? Probably you already like to talk; maybe you already like to read. Ever try to talk about real stuff with your friends but have trouble getting your thoughts clear? Ever read something marvelous but kept it to yourself?

Maybe it's time for a new hobby. Nothing formal. You could ask a few friends to read your favorite book, then get together for pizza. Cheap, quick, simple.

Risky?

Sure. You might think you've got a good grasp on how the universe works. You might even think you know your friends.

Just wait—are you in for a surprise! 🌀



Sheryl Chapman/Getty Images



Hey! Nat, My Friends Smoke Pot



Q: Some of my friends have started smoking pot. I don't want to do anything like that, but I like hanging out with my friends. What do I do?

A: First off, I'm proud of you for sticking up for yourself and warding off the substances. Taking personal responsibility for your body is a smart step toward success. Second, marijuana is illegal. That means what your friends are doing is against the law, not to mention extremely harmful to their lungs and brain. If your friends can't respect your choice, then they are not true friends. Friends come and go, but true friends stay forever. You need to step back and decide if they are really true friends. If so, talk to them about your concerns for their health and safety. If your intuition is correct, they'll listen. If they laugh or get angry with you, then their friendship is not worth your sacrifice. Then you'll do the brave thing, step out on a limb, and leave that circle.

Q: My boyfriend and I broke up after two years. I really miss him and have to see him in the halls at school every day. How do I get over him?

A: Two years. That is a long time to have a high school boyfriend. You have probably heard it from your friends already, but it won't be easy to just get over him. He was a part of your life for a long time. Right now you are probably doing exactly what I have done in a similar situation: mope. Change that. Go out with your girlfriends. Take up a new hobby—paint, write, or exercise. By investing your time into something new, you can replace thoughts of sadness and loneliness with your new adventures. Someday your true knight will come; it just takes time.

Q: My friends and I downloaded music off the Internet all the time. We burned copies of CDs and gave them out at school. A teacher found out and sent us to the SAO to "discuss the matter." What's the big deal?

A: In the past couple of years file sharing has exploded in the Internet, especially among our age group. However, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) claims that sharing music files peer-to-peer over the Internet is copyright fraud, because the musicians aren't paid royalties. The consequences of file sharing are growing, now reaching up to three years in jail and up to \$250,000 in fines. Those are two consequences I wouldn't want to deal with. Remember when you told this great joke to your best friend. Then she told it to your crush, and he laughed? That would make me angry. I would want to tell him myself and get the credit for my humor. The same goes with the music industry. Musicians write music as expression and want to convey it to you. And they deserve all the credit for their hard work.

Natalie Jacobs, a new columnist for Listen, is in response to your request that we have teens writing for teens. Natalie graduated from high school this past May, where she was student government copresident, took advanced placement classes, worked nearly full time, and met with local and county officials to provide more drug awareness programs for teens.

listen

Send your questions to:

Hey! Nat

Listen magazine

55 West Oak Ridge Drive

Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

THREE GOOD REASONS TO GET MOVING

By Shirley Byers Lalonde



Kristin threw her backpack on the coffee table and herself on the couch. She'd just come home from school, and the rest of the afternoon and the evening were hers. Hers to do whatever she wanted to do.

Feeling tired, irritable, and stressed out, all Kristin really wanted to do was kick back, relax, and veg out in the presence of some mindless TV program. The last thing on her mind was exercise. As she reached for the remote she wondered vaguely why she felt so tired. She had sat at her desk at school all day and then stood or sat behind a counter at her part-time job two evenings a week. Her parents drove her to school and to work, or she took the bus. She didn't play in any sports. It had been ages since she'd even ridden her bike or walked more than half a block. In her free time she would watch TV or hang out with her friends at the mall.

Kristin isn't an abnormal teen. In fact, she's fairly typical. Statistics show that nearly half of the young people ages 12 through 21 surveyed are not vigorously active on a regular basis. Physical activity declines dramatically with age during adolescence. And adolescent girls are much less physically active than guys of the same age group.

That's not to say North American teens are not busy. They are. They're going to school, they're thinking about college, and many, such as Kristin, are holding down part-time jobs. And, as with Kristin, exercise is the last thing they want to think about.

But the truth is exercise is what could make Kristin, and maybe you, feel better, do better, and even look better.

Here's how it works. Here are three reasons to get up and start moving.

1. When you exercise you feel better.

Studies have shown that exercise improves your moods, even for people who suffer from depression. Exercise tends to increase feelings of self-esteem and cause us to feel more positive about life in general.

And it doesn't take a lot to get results. One study found that short workouts of only eight minutes (that's the equivalent of walking a few blocks at a brisk pace) can help lower sadness, tension, and anger.

Ever notice how you feel better after a bike ride or even just a walk around the neighborhood and through the park? Even a single 25-minute workout with a video can improve your mood. But for the effect

to last you need to exercise on a regular basis. As far as mood improvement is concerned, aerobic exercise and strength training seem to offer similar benefits. Try for a half hour of exercise at least three times a week. You could join a gym, buy some expensive exercise equipment, or put on your runners and take a fast-paced walk. Instead of driving, being driven, or taking a bus, walk or bike to where you're going. You'll be getting exercise, and you'll feel better for it.

No one is really sure why exercise makes us feel better, but there are two possible reasons. When we exercise, our bodies release certain chemicals known as serotonin or beta-endorphins. These chemicals are the body's natural "uppers." They help us to feel relaxed and happy. Also, exercise helps to relieve other problems such as boredom and poor sleep patterns that contribute to depression. When we're sleeping well and not bored, we're less likely to feel down and depressed.

2. When you exercise, you do better.

If you're feeling better, you'll usually do better. If you have a positive self-image, if you're managing



Lawrence M. Sawyer/Getty Images



the stresses in your life, if you're less anxious and not depressed, you'll probably do better; and you'll be a better student, a better athlete, a better employee—you'll perform better at everything you do.

Regular physical exercise can also help keep your heart and lungs in good condition. It improves your muscular strength and endurance. People who exercise find they can walk farther without feeling achy and exhausted, as it increases their stamina. You might find that you don't need quite as much sleep as you used to and that you sleep better and wake feeling more refreshed. You'll have more energy.

Exercise provides a certain amount of protection against injury and sickness. Well-exercised muscles and bones are less likely to sprain, strain, or break. Regular exercise also strengthens your immune system, and helps it to do its job of fighting off colds, infections, and other sicknesses. Added future bonus: exercising as a teen can help to guard against osteoporosis (a condition of bone loss that can lead to fractures in older adults).

The discipline of exercising regularly can spill over into other parts of your life. Exercise teaches us about goal setting and dedication. As we see ourselves succeeding in this area of our lives, we are encouraged to set goals in other areas as well.

Regular exercise may even help you to do better in school. Aerobic exercise has been linked with improved reaction time, better math skills, and possibly increased creativity.

Here's what former president John F. Kennedy

had to say on the subject: "Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity. The relationship between the soundness of the body and the activities of the mind is subtle and complex. Much is not yet understood. But we do know what the Greeks knew: that intelligence and skill can only function at the peak of their capability when the body is healthy and strong; and that hardy spirits and tough minds usually inhabit sound bodies."

3. When you exercise you look better.

At the same time that exercise is making you healthy on the inside, toning your heart and lungs, your muscles and bones, it's toning you on the outside, too. Your body will be firmer, your posture more erect, and your color better. And if you're feeling better, chances are that your good health will shine through in the sparkle in your eyes and the smile on your face. ☘

A personal story:

Derek is a 21-year-old college student. In high school he started doing weight training, and he enjoyed it. But after he graduated and joined the workforce he found less and less time to exercise, and before long gave it up altogether.

Last fall he went back to college and started his exercise program again. He does weight training four or five days a week and plays hockey in a rec league twice a week.

Since he got back into the habit of regular exercise he's noticed some changes. He's feeling better. "I'm happier," he said. "I'm more focused, I find it easier to concentrate in class, and I sleep better."

And Derek also feels that he looks better. "I've bulked up, which is what I wanted to do," he said.

Derek plans on keeping on with regular exercise. "I exercise because I want to be stronger, and I want to be healthier," he said.

I Do

With this needle I thee wed.

So, little man, you're tired of grass,
LSD, acid, cocaine, and hash?

Then someone pretending to be a "true friend"
Said, "Let me introduce you to Miss Heroin."

Well, honey, before you start foolin' with me
Let me inform you just how it'll be.
For I will seduce you and make you my slave;
I've sent stronger men than you to the grave.

You'll think you could never be a disgrace
Until you end up addicted to poppy seed waste.
You'll start by inhaling me one afternoon,
But you'll be shooting me into your arm very soon.

Once I've entered deep down in your vein,
The craving will begin to drive you insane.
You'll need lots of money. Ain't you been told?
For darlin' I'm more expensive than pure gold.

You'll swindle your mother for less than a buck;
You'll end up an animal, vile and corrupt.
You'll mug and steal for a narcotic charm,
And only feel content when I'm deep in your arm.

One day you'll realize the monster you've grown,
Then solemnly promise to leave me alone.
If you think you'll have the mystical knack,
Just come, try to get me off of your back.

The vomit, the cramps, your guts in a knot,
Jangling nerves screaming for just one more shot.
The hot sweats, cold chills, and withdrawal pains
Can only be eased by my little white grains.

There's no other way. No need to look.
For deep down inside you know that you're hooked.
You'll desperately run to the pusher, and then
You'll welcome me back into your arms again.

And when you return, as I have here told,
You'll ultimately give me your body and soul.
You'll give up your morals, your conscience, your heart,
And then you'll be mine till death do us part.

Ashley Greene and Amber Brooking, 16
Indianapolis, Indiana

The puppy

Puppy! Puppy! Ball of fluff;
In the kennel chewing stuff.
What immortal being, holding an ace,
Could ever fashion any cuter face?

On what kitchen's linoleum floor
Did they learn to scratch at the back door?
Can any flea or tick attack thee?
Will a sudden sickness ever strike thee?

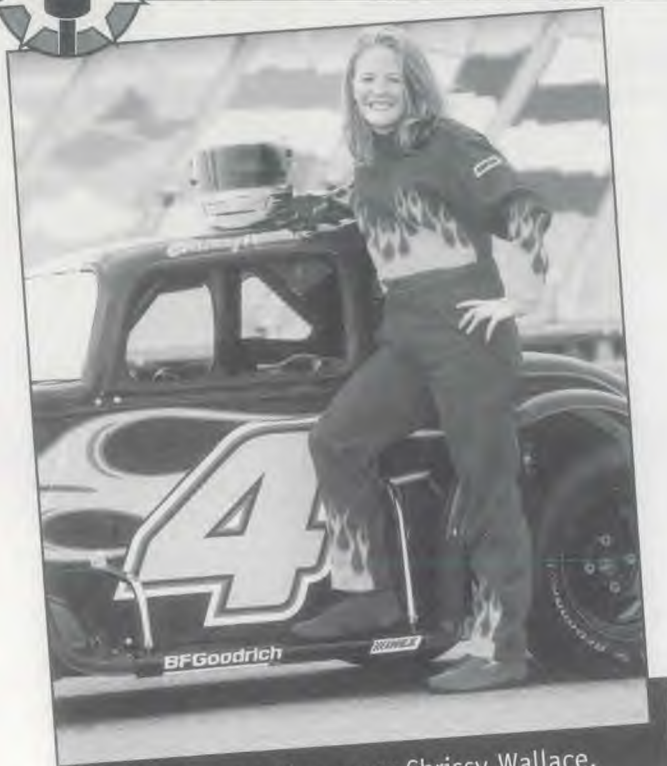
And what mold without flaw
Could form the perfect shape of thy paw?
And when the toy began to squeak,
Were you bold or were you meek?

Did wrestling with thy siblings cause thee pain?
In what part of the world was thy brain?
When the yelps turned to growls,
All turned to the moon with howls.

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made expensive shoes make thee?

Puppy! Puppy! Ball of fluff,
In the kennel chewing stuff.
What immortal being, holding an ace,
Could ever fashion any cuter face?

Apologies to William Blake
Steven Gilman, 14
Snellville, Georgia



Third-generation racer Chrissy Wallace.

Diamonds & Ovals

By Michele Deppe

"It is kind of cool that I can drive race cars . . . even though I don't have a regular driver's license," says 15-year-old Chrissy Wallace. Of course, she's confident that getting her license won't be a problem. "That's one test I'm not worried about."

Racing cars is a family affair for Chrissy, who is the daughter of NASCAR driver Mike Wallace and the niece of racers Kenny and Rusty Wallace. It all started back in Missouri, in the 1960s. Chrissy's grandfather, Russ Wallace, was a dirt-track champion, making ends meet by repairing vacuum cleaners on the side. Russ took his sons, Rusty, Mike, and Kenny, with him to the track, where they developed the

need for speed. And now Chrissy is carrying on the tradition as a third-generation race car driver.

The middle child of three, Chrissy says, "My little brother, Matthew, may want to start racing too. We'll see what our dad says this year." Her cousin Stephen, Uncle Rusty's son, is burning up the track in late-model stock car racing. Now 16, Stephen started his career with Bandoleros, the same series that Chrissy began with in 1998, at the age of 10.

Bandoleros are a cross between a go-kart and a compact racing car. Measuring about 10 feet long, with 30 horsepower, Bandoleros don't require the driver to shift gears. Chrissy had fun racing in the Bandolero series, and was the first female to win at Atlanta. When she turned 14, she graduated to the faster Legends series. Slightly smaller than a full-sized race car at 5/8 scale, the 140-horsepower Legend cars can reach speeds of more than 100 miles per hour. Legends require the same safety equipment and driving skills as any racing vehicle.

Concentration is an important key to avoiding collisions, but sometimes accidents are unavoidable. Last year in the Legends semipro feature, Chrissy was running in fourth place with only three more laps to go. Suddenly, a pair of cars crashed in front of her. She tried to go high to the outside rim of the track, but her car ended up being collected in the wreckage. And she came in nineteenth place.

Despite involvement in damaging racing incidents, Chrissy enjoyed three top 10 finishes during a series of 10 challenging competitions. "I just keep trying to do my best," Chrissy says. "Last year, which was my first year in Legends, I ran up front with everyone, and I was the first girl to ever win in a Legend car. That makes me want to see how far I can go."

The races at Lowe's Motor Speedway near Charlotte, North Carolina, carry the added pressure of media coverage, and they are often televised on SPEED channel. Chrissy copes well with cameras and is learning how to quickly switch gears from racing to granting interviews.

Chrissy says she handles stress by keeping her mind centered on the moment. "I just hold it all inside, because I know I can't think about other stuff at the time. Sometimes when I start getting upset I get a little defensive, but I mostly try to focus on what I am doing right then," she says in her charming Southern accent. "Afterward my favorite fun thing to do is hang out with my friends."

These racing experiences are preparing Chrissy

for accomplishing her dream. "I want to be a really successful driver in NASCAR Winston Cup racing," she says hopefully. That's a lofty goal for a teenage girl, but Chrissy believes that she has what it takes to give the guys a run for their money.

Chrissy is really fit and loves to be active. "It would drive me crazy to sit around the house and do nothing," she says.

Off the racetrack, Chrissy's passion is softball. At one point, she wasn't sure if she loved racing cars as much as softball. But these days she says that softball is a definite second. "It seems that I've always played softball. Last year I played left field for the Denver Dazzle, a fast-pitch tournament team. Plus I was on the team at school, so I had softball about nine months out of the year. I pick up basketball during the winter."

Excelling at one sport helps Chrissy to be good at another. "I suppose softball keeps me in shape for racing," she says. "You have to be sort of strong to race, especially your arm muscles. Your arms get tired after holding them up so long on the steering wheel."

In a word, "busy" sums up Chrissy's racing schedule. "Normally I start racing cars for the summer series at Lowe's Motor Speedway in June, and that is over in August. Then we run the Nationals, and I run the track here in Concord every Friday. In December we begin the winter series at Lowe's oval track and road course."

Chrissy's personal hero is busy too, but always has time for her. And he's someone she knows well and trusts. "My dad is who I look up to the most," she says. "I've learned everything from him. He has a good attitude. And he's always so supportive of what I do. He comes out every week to watch my races, even if he has to fly from somewhere."

Her hero is against taking drugs, and so is she. "I


want to have a great future and a good life, like my father. I don't even want to try smoking or drinking or anything else. I know people who got into drinking and drugs. It has really messed up their lives. They started hanging out with the wrong people, and that's how they got started.

Some of them wouldn't come to school, and have gotten into so much trouble that they've been kicked out of their house. And now nobody wants to talk to them because of things they've done. I never want anything like that to happen to me, and staying away from drugs is part of that."

Chrissy is proud of the stand her sister Lindsey has taken against drugs. "My sister won the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) contest at her school, and then won first place out of all the schools in Cabarrus County [North Carolina] by creating an anti-drug T-shirt design."

Education is important too, and Chrissy consistently makes the honor roll. Her favorite subjects are marketing, computer applications, and biology. She hopes to go to college on a softball scholarship, and to earn a degree in business and marketing. But the timing has to be in sync with her other goals. "I would be willing to put college on hold for a little while if I'm able to race in NASCAR," she says. "Sometimes those kind of things only come around once, so you've got to go for it when you can."

She hopes to make a difference in people's lives and to help them, as her father does. "My cousin has muscular dystrophy, and my family likes to donate money to finding a cure for that."

Considering her winning ways with softball and racing, it's easy to see that there are precious gems in Chrissy Wallace's future—in the shape of diamonds and ovals. 



Chrissy suits up and climbs into the driver's seat. Ready to roll.



The "feature" race winner with her dad, Mike.

EDITOR
Anita Jacobs

DESIGN
Doug Bendall

EDITORIAL SECRETARY
Gail Hanson

VP PERIODICALS
Richard Coffen

ASSISTANT VP PERIODICALS
Howard Scoggins

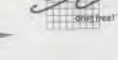
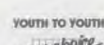
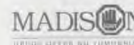
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HE DIDN'T PLAN IT THAT WAY

The first time I saw him he was tiny and red and wrinkled. But as I watched him grow day after day, he became a precious little boy with a shy grin that would melt your heart, and strawberry blond curls that would make any girl envious.

When he was only 3 years old his parents divorced, and he and his younger sister went to live with their grandparents. When he was 12, his life really became fragmented. His father's life had become more stable, and he decided he wanted his children to live with him, on the opposite side of the country from the only home he remembered.

Going from a small country school to a large city school was quite a transition. His previous classroom had 12 to 14 students in it versus 30 or more in his new school. Being a shy country boy, it took him a while to make friends, and unfortunately he chose friends who introduced him to a way of life totally foreign to his previous life.

He learned to smoke. He could see nothing wrong with that, since his dad smoked. Then he was introduced to pot. And then it was cocaine. Dad would come home and find his video camera gone, or his new VCR, or? The craving for more cocaine drove him to disregard what he was doing to others or taking from others. He just had to have one more hit. That's when his dad threw him out of the house.

He learned that "cocaine rocks the central nervous system, giving users a quick, intense feeling of power and energy. Snorting highs last between 15 and 30 minutes; smoking highs last between five and 10 minutes."* He found the first time that he snorted cocaine that he felt better and happier than he ever had in his whole life, but the rest of his drug experience was spent trying to achieve that same euphoric feeling.

However, he was one of the lucky ones. He was caught buying drugs and put in jail for several years, which probably saved his life. "Cocaine is highly addictive, and as a result the drug, not the user, calls the shots. Even after one use, cocaine and crack can create both physical and psychological cravings that make it very difficult for users to stop."*

Now he is working hard to make a new life for himself—a drug-free life, one in which he calls the shots and makes the choices. Positive choices that will keep him in control of his life. Isn't that the way life should be lived?

*"Some Drugs Teens Use," contributed by 4girls.gov. Date reviewed: June 2002 by Wes Bowman, Ph.D.

Anita Jacobs



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